UNITED
NATIONS

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Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CN.17/1996/L.2
26 April 1996

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
Fourth session
18 April-3 May
Agenda item 3

CROSS-SECTORAL ISSUES, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Draft decision submitted by the Chairman

Combating poverty

(Chapter 3 of Agenda 21)

1. The Commission took note of the report of the Secretary-General on combating poverty (E/CN.17/1996/9).

2. The Commission reiterated all decisions made at its third session on the issue of combating poverty.

3. In accordance with Commitment 2 of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development 1/ adopted at the World Summit for Social Development, the Commission urges Governments to formulate or strengthen, as a matter of urgency and preferably by the end of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996), national strategies to eradicate absolute poverty and reduce overall poverty. Such strategies should be comprehensive in order to address all aspects of poverty and integrate gender perspectives, and should also be geared towards substantially and sustainably reducing overall poverty in the shortest possible time, reducing inequalities, and eradicating absolute poverty by a target date to be specified by each country in its national context. In addition, the Commission recommends that Governments integrate environmental issues in such strategies and ensure that they are related to national sustainable development strategies, while recognizing that economic growth is a fundamental element of sustainable development. Such strategies should be

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1/ A/CONF.166/9, chap. I, resolution 1, annex I.

supported by the international community, which should assist developing countries, including through international organizations, in their efforts to achieve the overall goal of eradicating poverty and ensuring basic social protection.

4. The Commission recognized that meeting the basic human needs of all and eradicating absolute poverty is an objective of the highest priority that has been regarded as such in all the recent United Nations conferences convened since the World Summit for Children held in 1990. In addition to the relevant conferences and conventions mentioned in its report on its third session, 2/ the Commission welcomed the Beijing Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women. 3/ The Commission noted, in particular, the important role played by women in poverty eradication strategies and the particularly difficult situations that they face, as described in chapter IV.A of the Platform, as well as the importance of integrating gender perspectives in policies and programmes. The Commission welcomed preparatory work for the forthcoming United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), which emphasizes the importance of achieving the eradication of absolute poverty, the reduction of overall poverty and the creation of sustainable human settlements for ensuring sustainable development.

5. Since the general problem of poverty in developing countries, particularly in the least developed countries, is related to political, economic and social marginalization, all efforts to eradicate absolute poverty and reduce overall poverty within the context of sustainable development must be accompanied by mechanisms that would effectively address those issues.

6. The Commission suggests to the Economic and Social Council that in its future work the Commission focus its attention on the interlinkages between poverty and the environment, taking into account the fact that poverty is a complex multidimensional problem with origins in both the national and international domains, and recognizing that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development.

2/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 12 (E/1995/32).

3/ A/CONF.177/20, chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.